

Maryland Historical Trust – Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs  
Working Group on Native American Human Remains Meeting Minutes  
January 3, 2009

The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) – Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA) Working Group (Working Group) on Native American Human Remains Meeting was held at The Hillsmere-Annapolis East Library, 269 Hillsmere Dr, Annapolis, MD 21403.

Working Group Members Present: Tom Bodor, Claude Bowen, Virginia Busby, Sewell Fitzhugh, Bob Gajdys, Gina Hamlin, Richard Hughes, Maureen Kavanagh, Rico Newman, Bob Wall.

Guest Speaker present: Dr. Theodore Schurr

Members of the Public Present: Kate Dinnell, Guy Wells, Stephen Israel.

1. Introductions.

The meeting was called to order at 10:50 am. Maureen Kavanagh welcomed everyone and introduced the agenda. She mentioned that Dana Kollman had been asked to speak on the issue of study of human remains, but she was unable to make it. Chief Fitzhugh suggested that she be invited to the next meeting.

2. Acceptance/Amendment of Minutes of November 16, 2008 Meeting.

The minutes of the November 16, 2008 Working Group meeting were reviewed by the members. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Bob Gajdys and seconded by Tom Bodor. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Overview of Archeology—Bob Wall

Bob Wall presented an overview of archeology. He reviewed the purpose of archeology, the techniques and process. Some questions and discussion followed. There was then a break for lunch. Bob Gajdys commented that the lunch provided for the working group was the best to date.

4. Personal Statements by MHT Designees

Personal statements were made by all of the MHT designees. Maureen Kavanagh began with a summary of her education, background, experience, and professional interests in archeology. She described a project in Wisconsin in which she participated, where human remains were excavated in a highway salvage project, and then reburied near the original location. Tom Bodor followed, with a summary of his education, background and experience. He discussed his role as a working group member, his differing personal and professional perspectives on the issue of reburial, and the necessity of working within a regulatory framework. Richard Hughes then presented his background and experience. He mentioned the Caroline County ossuary, the differing perspectives on sites, and the need to collaborate to try to put living people back in the picture. Bob Wall followed Richard. He included in his presentation a discussion of the Cresaptown site excavations. Claude Bowen followed. He summarized his views on the importance of study of human

remains, on the fact that archeologists and Native Americans have a common interest in the preservation of sites, and that power must be shared in the decision-making process.

5. Discussion. There were comments and questions from Bob Gajdys, Rico Newman, and Chief Fitzhugh following the personal statements. Bob Gajdys talked about how he is a traditionalist and how that affects his perspective. Rico Newman commented that the scientific method can't suffice alone and that we need to strike a balance. He mentioned the difficulty of protecting sites on private lands, and that in the Native American view there is no distinction between a site and its surroundings. Chief Fitzhugh talked about the challenge of building trust between the Native Americans and the archeologists

6. Presentation by Dr. Theodore Schurr, University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Theodore Schurr from the University of Pennsylvania presented an overview of DNA analysis. Dr. Schurr is an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and a Consulting Curator in the American and Physical Anthropology Sections of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, where he also serves on the Repatriation Committee. Over the past 20 years, Dr. Schurr has investigated the prehistory of Asia and the Americas through field and laboratory research which has helped to define the nature and extent of mtDNA and Y-chromosome variation in Asian, Siberian and Native American populations.

Dr. Schurr did an overview of the genetic marker systems: mtDNA and Y chromosome DNA. He reviewed modern DNA studies and what those studies have revealed in terms of hypothesized migrations and relationships among all peoples worldwide. He reported on a project in the Lake Baikal region in which Neolithic remains were assessed to determine whether there was genetic continuity among the populations. The results showed that there were significant differences, suggesting that there were biologically distinct groups that occupied the region. He addressed some of the challenges of working with ancient remains, and described other bioarcheological analyses, including carbon/nitrogen, and strontium analyses, that can provide information about intergroup relationships, location, and migration.

Dr. Schurr's talk was followed by questions and discussion from members of the working group. Questions centered on what could be done with ancient DNA studies in terms of determining relationships, what some of the physical processes of DNA testing are, and what the necessary conditions were in terms of preservation.

7. Tentative plans were made to meet the last week of January, possibly on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Sewell Fitzhugh invited the working group to meet on the Eastern Shore.
8. Adjournment.  
The meeting adjourned at 3:50 pm.

